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Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 8 July 2003, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. SHARMA (Nepal)
(Vice-President)

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THE ROLE OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL IN THE INTEGRATED AND COORDINATED IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOMES OF AND FOLLOW-UP TO MAJOR UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCES AND SUMMITS

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In the absence of the Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala), Mr. Sharma (Nepal), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

THE ROLE OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL IN THE INTEGRATED AND COORDINATED IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOMES OF AND FOLLOW-UP TO MAJOR UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCES AND SUMMITS (agenda item 4) (A/57/48; E/2003/67, 83 and 87)

The PRESIDENT said that the work of the Economic and Social Council on the follow-up to conferences and summits had been given a new impetus by the outcome of the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the General Assembly on the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields. As far as the coordination segment of the Council's substantive session was concerned, perhaps the most notable recommendation of the Working Group was its request that the Council should adopt a multi-year work programme for that segment by 2004. It was to be hoped that the panel discussions following the general discussion would help the Council to begin to prepare such a programme, as well as to identify areas in which further improvement was needed.

Mr. CIVILI (Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the role of the Economic and Social Council in the implementation of the outcomes of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits (E/2003/67), said that, although the report had been finalized midway through the Working Group's deliberations, it nevertheless addressed issues that were relevant to the Council's follow-up to the Working Group's report (A/57/48). It was the Council that had first introduced the concept of integrated follow-up as an organizing principle, and it could draw satisfaction from the fact that that principle had since been transformed into a political imperative to exploit in full the added value of major conferences and to move the international community into an "implementation mode".

The inter-agency system had moved far beyond simply ensuring that duplication was avoided and broad policy directions taken into account. The Millennium Declaration in particular, reinforced by the outcomes of the International Conference on Financing for

Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development provided the system with a common policy framework to which all its member organizations were fully committed. The system no longer needed to be prodded into concerted action.

The preparation by the Council of a multi-year thematic work programme for its coordination segment, to which the President had referred, was a crucial element in pursuing a cross-sectoral approach to reviewing progress in the implementation of conference outcomes. The Council might wish to consider extending that approach to its overall work, following its experiments with enhanced linkages between the various segments of its substantive session. The interactions between the Council and the United Nations funds and programmes in the context of the operational activities segment could also be used to enhance the Council's capacity to take an active role in shaping the collective contribution made by operational activities to the achievement of the goals set at conferences.

With regard to the Council's interactions with the United Nations system as a whole, the Secretary-General's report contained some useful ideas on its relationships with its functional and regional commissions, and it would find the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) an active and responsive partner in the area of policy coordination in relation to the follow-up to conferences.

The three basic requirements for progress in coordination and coherence within the system were inclusive decision-making processes, an authoritative common policy framework and meaningful sets of policy guidelines. As a result of the conferences of the 1990s and the Millennium Declaration, the first two of those requirements had been met: the Council had a crucial role to play in ensuring that progress was made in relation to the third. The further consolidation of the Council's inclusive and participatory methods of work in relation to the organizations of the United Nations system was an important prerequisite for greater effectiveness, as was more in-depth policy guidance rooted in agreed development objectives.

Moreover, the Council's interactions with the organizations of the system should progressively engage the intergovernmental bodies that set the policies for those organizations. It had already successfully experimented with such intergovernmental dialogue at its meetings with the Bretton Woods institutions in April 2003, and the policy environment was ripe for it to consider extending the experiment to other areas. The Council had the mandate, structures and

means to play a key leadership role in advancing an effective and integrated follow-up to conferences and, in the current inter-agency environment, it could look forward to having an even greater impact on efforts to integrate conference follow-up.

Mr. EFFAH-APENTENG (Ghana), Vice-Chairman of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the General Assembly on the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields, said that the Working Group had realized from the outset that it would have to focus on a limited number of areas if it was to complete the complex task set for it by the General Assembly. He believed that it had made concrete progress in all four of the areas outlined by the President of the General Assembly at its first meeting, namely: the organization of the work of the General Assembly; the respective roles of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, and the functional commissions of the latter; the impact of intergovernmental work on the implementation of conference goals and commitments; and the modalities for reviews of conferences.

The recommendations contained in General Assembly resolution 57/270 B would give a new impetus to the Council's coordination work and would structure the dialogue between the Council and the General Assembly on conference follow-up. The resolution had also launched a review of the working methods of the functional commissions and set out firm principles to guide future conference reviews. In addition, the Working Group had also recommended that the financial and trade institutions should make a greater contribution to the Council's work and that the Council's relationship with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) should be strengthened, particularly with regard to the follow-up to the Monterrey Conference. The Working Group had agreed to review the mechanisms for follow-up to that conference and had also provided clear guidance to the United Nations system on how to support the coherent implementation of conference outcomes.

At the political level, the whole exercise had demonstrated that the spirit of cooperation and compromise was alive and well, in the reaffirmation by all countries of their commitment to reorienting intergovernmental goals with such implementation in mind. If the recommendations

contained in the General Assembly resolution were not simply to be added to the pious declarations cluttering the archives of the United Nations, all Member States should give a practical demonstration of their political will to move the international development agenda forward.

Mr. DE RUYT (Belgium), Vice-Chairman of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the General Assembly on the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields, noting that the General Assembly had reiterated in its resolution 57/270 B that the Council was the central mechanism for system-wide coordination, highlighted six points that required Council action. First of all, it was called upon to establish a multi-year programme for the coordination segment of its substantive session on the basis of a list of issues common to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits; that would not only enable its functional and regional commissions to prepare their contributions to the Council's work more effectively but would also allow cross-sectoral issues to be examined in greater depth without duplication. Secondly, the functional commissions were requested to review their methods of work, following the example of the Commission on Sustainable Development. Thirdly, the resolution called for the theme of the high-level segment to be related to the theme of the coordination segment. Fourthly, the Council was called upon to strengthen the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society in its work, as indeed it had done in the first few days of the current session. Fifthly, the resolution made a number of recommendations for enhancing the dialogue between the Council and the organizations of the United Nations system. The Working Group had put forward the idea that the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) should report to the coordination segment on the work of the United Nations Development Group in the area of integrated follow-up to conferences; it would be interesting to see how such initiatives could contribute to the Council's work on specific cross-sectoral issues. Sixthly, and lastly, the Working Group had paved the way for the General Assembly to hold a special meeting on the follow-up to conferences as part of its review of the Millennium Declaration in 2005. Such a meeting would provide an opportunity to take stock of the implementation of the commitments made at United Nations conferences and summits, and he called on the Council to throw its full weight behind the preparations therefor.

He hoped that the Council would pursue its work on the follow-up to conferences in the same constructive and pragmatic spirit as the Working Group had shown. Much remained to be done if the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences were to have a real impact on all development actors. The conferences and summits of the previous decade had raised expectations: resolution 57/270 B challenged a number of mechanisms and bodies, whose effectiveness had sometimes been called into question, to meet those expectations.

Mr. NEIL (Jamaica) said that the implementation of the outcomes of conferences was such a broad subject, involving such a wide range of interrelated, cross-cutting and thematic issues, that it was sometimes difficult to keep track of the specific commitments entered into at the conferences. He wondered whether the proposed process for coordinating implementation and follow-up provided for a focus on the implementation of specific commitments, such as those adopted in Monterrey with regard to official development assistance (ODA), and whether it was still possible that a new mechanism would be set up to monitor implementation. He also wondered how it was proposed to deal with the inadequate implementation of agreed goals, and asked whether the proposed review process would be a continuous one and thus render review conferences obsolete.

Mr. BENMELLOUK (Observer for Morocco), speaking on a point of order, said that the programme of work for the substantive session of 2003 (E/2003/L.5) indicated that the Council was due to begin its coordination segment with an introduction of the report of the Secretary-General on the role of the Economic and Social Council in the integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits (E/2003/67), followed by a general discussion on the subject. He urged the President to adhere to the programme of work rather than initiate an informal debate with the Vice-Chairmen of the Ad Hoc Working Group. It was essential that the programme of work be respected as delegations wishing to participate on certain items counted on the programme of work to inform them when those discussions would take place. The Group of 77 and China were also dissatisfied that the programme of work for the general segment had been modified without consulting the regional groups.

The PRESIDENT said that, while he recognized that the work programme made no specific reference to the dialogue with the Vice-Chairmen of the Ad Hoc Working Group, he thought that the Council should take advantage of their presence in Geneva. Holding an interactive dialogue with them would make a positive contribution to the general debate that was to follow.

Mr. BENMELLOUK (Observer for Morocco) said that the statements made by members during a general discussion formed part of an interactive dialogue and no distinction should be made between such statements and those made as part of a debate with the Vice-Chairmen of the Ad Hoc Working Group.

Mr. NEBENZIA (Russian Federation) said that his delegation supported the point of order raised by the observer for Morocco and was in favour of adhering to the programme of work. Although his delegation did not object to holding a constructive dialogue with the Vice-Presidents of the Ad Hoc Working Group after the general discussion, the points it wished to raise were relevant to both the general discussion and the interactive dialogue and it would prefer to raise them during the general discussion.

The PRESIDENT said that he would prefer to continue the interactive dialogue with the Vice-Presidents of the Ad Hoc Working Group before commencing the general discussion as scheduled in the programme of work. It was regrettable that there appeared to have been a breakdown in communication between the Bureau of the Council and its members. He would appreciate the Council's understanding in the matter.

Mr. MOJTAHED SHABESTARI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his delegation was in favour of strengthening the role of the United Nations in global issues and recognized that the major conferences often gave new impetus to United Nations activities. However, he failed to understand the philosophy behind such conferences, as most of the issues they addressed were already being considered by existing United Nations bodies. The need for such conferences therefore raised doubts about the future role of those bodies within the activities of the United Nations. While he did not object to the conferences being seen as the "face" of the United Nations reform process, the creation of new bodies to address the same issues as existing United Nations organizations would affect the implementation of programmes

and funding requirements. He would therefore like further information about the role of the existing United Nations bodies and the coordination between the future activities of those bodies and the United Nations conferences.

Mr. NEBENZI (Russian Federation) said that the major United Nations conferences and summits of the last decade had given a powerful impetus to the Organization's role in tackling the world's social and economic problems. The Economic and Social Council was a key coordinating mechanism for implementing the outcomes of those conferences and summits. The Council's current methods of work had been tried and tested, and any proposal to change them would need to be very convincing. His delegation was of the view that it was unnecessary to change the Council's working methods to accommodate new proposals to strengthen its substantive role.

The major United Nations conferences and summits should be seen in the context of their combined contribution to the achievement of internationally agreed development goals. The Ad Hoc Working Group of the General Assembly on follow-up to conferences and summits had recommended that the Council should adopt a cross-sectoral approach to the common themes that had emerged from the conferences and summits. To that end, it should draw up a multi-year programme of work. It should also be able to react quickly to new social or economic problems as they arose, and the report of the Secretary-General contained some useful suggestions as to how that might be done.

His delegation agreed that it was necessary to streamline the way in which the Council conducted its business, for example, by transmitting to the General Assembly items that could be more usefully discussed by that body. Thought could also be given to prolonging the Council's general segment to allow for a more leisurely consideration of items, without downgrading the importance of the rest of its work. The idea of mandating the Committee for Development Policy to examine new and emerging issues relating to financing for development was interesting because the Committee's conclusions could serve as a basis for fruitful discussion between the Council and the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization (WTO). However, the Committee for Development Policy should not be charged with following up the implementation of the commitments entered into at the International Conference on Financing for Development, because that would run counter to the provisions of the Monterrey Consensus.

His delegation was in favour of giving the functional commissions a greater role in following up the implementation of conference outcomes. The regional commissions were also important, because they had the potential to organize wide-ranging and intersectoral dialogue at the regional level. The Ad Hoc Working Group had stressed the role of civil society and NGOs in following up the outcomes of major forums, a position that his delegation fully endorsed. Finally, the Statistical Commission should continue its work on drawing up basic indicators for the integrated and coordinated follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits, and elaborate development indicators tailored to the social and economic conditions prevailing in the various countries.

Mr. AKINSANYA (Nigeria) said he recognized that coordinated and integrated implementation at the regional level was very important in terms of policy coherence. It would be interesting to hear, therefore, how the Vice-Chairmen of the Ad Hoc Working Group viewed the role of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) in the implementation of the outcomes of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits.

The PRESIDENT said that the Vice-Chairmen of the Ad Hoc Working Group had agreed to remain throughout the general discussion. He appreciated their cooperation and understanding. He invited them to respond to the questions that had been asked.

Mr. EFFAH-APENTENG (Ghana), Vice-Chairman of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the General Assembly on the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields, said that, although General Assembly resolution 57/270 B emphasized the need to respect the thematic unity of each conference and the interlinkages between them, the focus of the Ad Hoc Working Group was the use of the existing mechanisms within the United Nations system to ensure the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major conferences. Efforts had consequently been made to enhance the effectiveness of the existing mechanisms. It was important to bear in mind that each conference had had its own mechanisms and had made its own recommendations. In some areas, consequently, there were gaps. For that reason, the Ad Hoc Working Group had recommended that the UNCTAD Trade and Development Board be associated with the Council in efforts to implement the Monterrey Consensus.

With regard to monitoring, there could be no doubt that it was very difficult to agree on a set of indicators to measure the performance of Member States in respect of the specific commitments they had entered into at the conferences. In the course of time, such a set of indicators would surely be developed. It was more important, however, to have political will, without which no headway could be made. Although the Council had been improving its working methods, much more could be done. In reply to the question by the representative of Nigeria, he said that the regional commissions of the United Nations system had been given specific guidelines on how to interact with regional programmes such as NEPAD.

Mr. DE RUYT (Belgium), Vice-Chairman of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the General Assembly on the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields, said that the Ad Hoc Working Group was responsible for monitoring the implementation of the outcomes of a wide range of conferences dealing with very different subjects. Its task was made more interesting by the fact that it was not entitled to create a separate mechanism to do so. Creating such a mechanism would automatically lead to the duplication of what had been done by other bodies. To be able to integrate a monitoring system into the existing bodies and increase coordination between them, it was necessary to inject greater energy into the efforts of the Ad Hoc Working Group in the social and economic fields. It was to be hoped that General Assembly resolution 57/270 B would enable the entire United Nations system to become more dynamic. It was important to do as much as possible through the existing system, focusing on specific issues and priorities.

The PRESIDENT invited the Council to begin the general discussion.

Mr. BENMELLOUK (Observer for Morocco), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, expressed his gratitude to the Vice-Chairmen of the Ad Hoc Working Group for their contribution and said that he fully agreed with what they had said. He welcomed the fact that the Ad Hoc Working Group had focused on strengthening the coordinating role of the Council and that positive outcomes had been achieved in that regard. The Council should concentrate on implementing the conclusions of the Ad Hoc Working Group as set out in General Assembly resolution 57/270 B.

One of the most significant achievements of the Ad Hoc Working Group had been the adoption of a cross-sectoral thematic approach towards the implementation of the commitments made at United Nations conferences and summits. Instead of being limited to repeating the current practices of the coordination segment, the new approach should be used as a tool for conducting a concrete evaluation of the progress made in implementation and its impact on the achievement of the development goals set by the United Nations. It should be based on a list of cross-sectoral thematic issues common to the various conferences and summits, in order to establish a multi-year work programme that would make the work of the Council more predictable. The Group of 77 and China were ready to do all they could to assist in attaining those goals.

The Council should endeavour to involve all subsidiary bodies and other constituents of the United Nations system in reviewing the progress made in the field of implementation. All the functional commissions and the various follow-up mechanisms should participate in the work of the coordination segment in order to give more depth to the discussions. The decision to involve the UNCTAD Trade and Development Board was an extremely important one. The aim was to ensure that all dimensions were taken into account in the new approach. The participation of the private sector and civil society was equally important.

Another of the important decisions relating to the Council was the reform of the working methods of the functional commissions and other subsidiary bodies of the Council. The aim was to concentrate the efforts of those commissions and bodies on the evaluation and monitoring of the implementation of the commitments made by their member States.

In its resolution 57/270 B, the General Assembly highlighted the importance of applying and developing indicators to assess the implementation of commitments. The work of the United Nations Statistical Commission in that regard was particularly welcome. One of the main tasks of the Council was to ensure that indicators were developed for the purposes of monitoring the policies and efforts of developed countries in accordance with MDG 8.

Developed countries should take urgent action to meet their commitments in terms, inter alia, of market access, debt reduction and elimination, ODA, the transfer of technology, poverty eradication and sustainable development. It was equally important that those countries should adopt coherent financial and commercial policies.

Inter-institutional coordination was the key to integrated and coordinated implementation. The Council should thus continue to improve its cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions and the WTO. Efforts should also be made to improve interaction between the various organizations of the United Nations system for integrated implementation. The funds and programmes of the United Nations should reflect the results of the major conferences and summits as well as the legislative follow-up work undertaken by the General Assembly, the Council and its functional commissions.

The Council should make use of the results of the Ad Hoc Working Group when monitoring its progress since 1995. It should review the cross-cutting issues common to the various conferences and summits and should improve its relations with the various intergovernmental and inter-institutional mechanisms. It was important that the Council should build on its experience and concentrate on strengthening the results already obtained.

The Council should have a global vision. It should both complement the work of the General Assembly and coordinate the activities of the various components of the United Nations system.

Mr. BRUNI (Italy), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the acceding countries of Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, the associated countries of Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey and the European Free Trade Agreement (EFTA) countries of Iceland and Liechtenstein, said that, although the task of the Ad Hoc Working Group had not been an easy one, it had succeeded in reaching an agreement based on the common goal to capitalize on the momentum created by the conferences and summits of the previous decade. The focus had been on implementation and on making the best possible use of existing institutions. The Ad Hoc Working Group had been

guided by the vision of a world in which international relations were built on a strong and credible multilateral system. A programme of work had been devised that committed the entire membership to making progress on those issues.

The Ad Hoc Working Group's debates had clearly shown that a broad consensus existed on the Council's central role in system-wide coordination and in promoting integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits. As a result of its efforts since 1995 to coordinate activities, the Council was in a position to draw upon its own experience. Subsequent conferences had not only recognized the Council's important role but had mandated it to play a major role. It had also been assigned more crucial tasks in light of the policy guidance emanating from the Millennium Summit, the Monterrey Consensus and the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

The participation of the presiding officers of the functional commissions in the discussions within the Council of cross-thematic issues was very valuable. He was confident that those commissions would successfully review their methods of work. The new path being taken by the Commission on Sustainable Development, for example, showed how innovation could lead to more targeted work that kept the United Nations at the focus of the initiatives and retained the attention of Governments, civil society and other stakeholders.

In adopting the resolution prepared by the Ad Hoc Working Group, the General Assembly had made the Council a focal point in the coordination of efforts by bodies such as the regional commissions, the Bretton Woods institutions, the WTO, the entire United Nations system, NGOs and the private sector. Another important achievement of the Ad Hoc Working Group had been to strengthen cohesiveness within the United Nations by encouraging stronger cooperation between the Council and the General Assembly.

In order to achieve the MDGs and the objectives of the other major conferences and summits, there was a need for sustained political attention, a strong sense of commitment and unwavering dedication at both the national and international levels. The Union believed that setting a 2005 target would strengthen the common will to focus on implementation based on a comprehensive review of the progress achieved. In that context, the Council's contribution would be crucial to the success of the major event mentioned in the resolution.

He hoped that a productive discussion of the themes contained in the multi-year work programme for the coordination segment, based on a list of cross-sectoral thematic issues, would begin as soon as possible. That would be the first step towards acting on the common willingness to enable the Council to fulfil its institutional responsibilities of providing system-wide coordination, oversight and policy guidance as well as its analytical role in identifying new and emerging issues.

During the Ad Hoc Working Group's discussion of cross-sectoral thematic issues, the Union had expressed its preliminary views on incorporating means of implementation, the promotion and protection of human rights and gender issues into all the topics under discussion. It had circulated a tentative list of issues for consideration including poverty eradication, human and social development, natural resources and sustainable development and Africa. The multi-year programme would enable the United Nations system and relevant stakeholders to improve their contributions to the Council's discussions. The Union had endeavoured to be comprehensive, balanced and focused in its proposals. It was open to suggestions from other delegations and looked forward to a continuing dialogue on those issues.

Mr. SIV (United States of America) said that, through the Millennium Declaration, the Monterrey Consensus and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, the international community had developed both an intellectual framework and a set of concrete goals for eradicating poverty and achieving development. That vision was based on a shared commitment to enhanced partnership and the idea that each country had primary responsibility for its own economic and social development. Rather than rehashing the debates that had led to those conference outcomes, the Council should provide its subsidiary bodies, United Nations organs and the specialized agencies with practical guidance on how to work in harmony towards attaining the goals set.

Mr. CHAUDHRY (Pakistan) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by the observer for Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. While the report of the Secretary-General (E/2003/67) contained many useful recommendations, the decisions of the Ad Hoc Working Group, adopted by the General Assembly, should be the starting point for future action. He welcomed the fact that the Council had been given primary responsibility for coordinating the implementation of conference outcomes. Discussions on the

development of a multi-year work programme for the coordination segment should begin as soon as possible. The task of carrying out the substantive review process should be given to the functional commissions.

Mr. GOPINATHAN (India) said that his delegation fully endorsed the statement made by the observer for Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The establishment of a multi-year programme of work for the consideration of cross-cutting thematic issues would be a useful means of developing a more integrated approach to the implementation of conference outcomes. His delegation was also willing to consider the Secretary-General's suggestion that lead organizations be designated for each theme. The functional commissions, sessions of the General Assembly and specific mechanisms established by conference outcomes also had a role to play in conference follow-up. The thematic unity of each conference would be respected through decision-making on a case-by-case basis.

The role of the Council had also been clarified, since it was clear that the operational activities segment could not be subsumed under the issue of conference follow-up. Moreover, a rigid linkage between the themes of the high-level and coordination segments, coupled with a multi-year programme of work for the latter, would deprive the Council of the necessary flexibility for considering issues of contemporary interest in the high-level segment. He particularly welcomed the practice of holding a policy dialogue, during the high-level segment, on important developments in the global economy and international economic cooperation with the heads of financial and trade institutions.

Ms. OH Hyun-joo (Republic of Korea) said that the General Assembly resolution on conference follow-up should become a valuable source of reference not only for the work of the Council, but also for that of the Second and Third Committees of the General Assembly. Her delegation endorsed the recommendations contained in that resolution, as well as those in the Secretary-General's report. She drew attention to the need to develop greater thematic unity between the high-level and coordination segments of the substantive session, with a view to taking advantage of the synergies produced by the work of the two segments. The functional

commissions should enhance their role as forums for expert review and follow-up throughout the implementation of conference outcomes. She welcomed the reforms undertaken to revitalize the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development, and encouraged similar steps to improve the working methods of other commissions.

In choosing the themes for the 2004 substantive session of the Council, it was important to give careful consideration to the linkages between the high-level and coordination segments. At the same time, the Council needed to formulate its multi-year programme of work for the coordination segment with a view to complementing the cross-cutting themes selected. Preparations for formulating the programme should begin as early as possible to ensure its completion by 2004.

Mr. KUCHINSKY (Ukraine) said that the long-awaited resolution on conference follow-up adopted by the General Assembly was a landmark event, establishing a clear framework for achieving the internationally agreed development goals. The work of the Council could be greatly enriched by the adoption of a horizontal approach, focusing on common themes for conferences. His delegation supported the establishment of a multi-year programme for the coordination segment, building on the experience of the functional commissions and ensuring greater synchronization of their programme cycles. Nevertheless, it was pivotal to maintain the necessary flexibility in the work of the Council to take up major issues at short notice.

In planning the multi-year work programme, it was important to respect the decisions already taken, such as the planned review of the system-wide implementation of gender mainstreaming into all policies and programmes. In view of its cross-cutting nature, gender mainstreaming should also be an integral part of the discussion on coordinated conference follow-up. The proposal to devote the next high-level segment to the consideration of issues relating to the least developed countries was worthy of examination. Decisions on the themes for the high-level, coordination and humanitarian affairs segments should be taken as early as the previous substantive session. While he agreed that there should be greater thematic unity across the different segments, more substantial efforts should also be made to integrate humanitarian issues into the agenda of the substantive session.

A more rigorous division of labour between the Council and the General Assembly was required, in order to avoid duplication of work and to streamline the burgeoning agenda of the Second Committee. The role of the Council should be strengthened to provide clear and meaningful guidance to its subsidiary bodies, especially with regard to conference follow-up, and to stimulate closer interaction between those bodies. The functional commissions needed to make further improvements to their work programmes and working methods, including through early election of their officers. In line with paragraph 40 of the Secretary-General's report (E/2003/67), closer interaction should be devised between the Council and the executive boards of the funds and programmes. The role of the regional commissions as focal points for monitoring the implementation of conference outcomes at the regional level should be further strengthened. Remarkable progress had been made in developing shared approaches between the Council and the Bretton Woods institutions and WTO, and the Council should continue to develop its unique role as principal interlocutor with those institutions. It could also work to improve its links with civil society.

Ms. HENKIN (United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)) said that the 1994 United Nations International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) had made a significant contribution to defining the international consensus on development that had later been refined at other summits and conferences. Only combined action at the field level could provide the basis for sustainable solutions to development issues. The recent General Assembly resolution on conference follow-up provided a useful basis for a more coordinated approach. In particular, a cross-sectoral approach would help to overcome the gaps in intergovernmental processes. The joint session of the executive boards of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), as well as the annual sessions of the functional commissions, could be used to identify cross-cutting issues. Their suggestions could be made directly to the Council, which would greatly benefit from the bottom-up approach.

She welcomed the efforts being made to enhance the coherence of policy dialogues held by the Council. UNFPA was working hard to ensure the consistency of national development strategies with the MDGs. She called for an increased focus on engaging constituents at the

national level, with a view to developing common databases and shared analytical frameworks for development operations, for instance. The Fund was setting up strategic results frameworks, linking programme support to the national framework, and providing assistance for national capacity-building.

Mr. MARKOTIC (Observer for Croatia) said that, during the Croatian presidency of the Council in 2002, enhanced cooperation within the United Nations system had already been made a priority, through the introduction of regular meetings between the Presidents of the Council, the General Assembly and the Security Council.

In the area of conference follow-up, the biggest challenge facing the Council was how to maximize the impact of outcomes on implementation and to engage national-level actors and constituents. The new multi-year work programme for the coordination segment should be flexible enough to take up major issues at short notice, and to enable the Council to extend the thematic approach to other segments.

The Council should seek to enhance the involvement of the entire United Nations system and all relevant stakeholders in the implementation of conference outcomes. The executive boards of the funds and programmes should look for ways of achieving development goals within the larger framework. Greater efforts should be made to avoid overlapping between the functional commissions, for instance through regular meetings with the Council and among themselves. It was important that the commissions should become more active in preparing for the substantive sessions of the Council. The regional commissions should play a crucial role in the follow-up to conferences, by keeping track of achievements and commitments made at the national and regional levels. In consultation with the regional offices of all organizations of the United Nations system, the commissions should prepare common regional assessment reports, to serve as a basis for a regional development framework.

Country-level implementation of conference outcomes should make full use of the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions. Duplicative requests for national reports should be avoided. For instance, Croatia's first progress report on the MDGs had been prepared with the help of the UNDP country office, and would be used by both the national Government and the United Nations system in monitoring progress at the national level.

Mr. BOULGARIS (Observer for Switzerland) said he welcomed the recent General Assembly resolution on conference follow-up, which was designed to ensure that follow-up took place as and when the need arose, rather than on a periodic basis. A multi-year work programme for the coordination segment was an important step towards strengthening the role of the Council in implementing conference outcomes. Further efforts were required to harmonize the work of the functional commissions, both among themselves and with other United Nations organs. For instance, they could work together to produce a single report concerning the follow-up to particular conferences.

He called for innovative follow-up mechanisms, such as those suggested in chapter III of the Monterrey Consensus, entitled "Staying engaged". The spring meetings between the Council and the Bretton Woods institutions and the WTO were a welcome opportunity to enhance the coherence of policies and programmes. His delegation supported the efforts to strengthen the central role of the Council in guiding and coordinating the work of United Nations organs.

Mr. LANGMORE (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that the major United Nations conferences and summits had articulated widespread opposition to globalization. Efforts to implement the outcomes of the major international forums had hitherto been largely inadequate; it was clear that ways must be found to revitalize the Economic and Social Council and help it to turn conference declarations into reality. To that end, the Council should give consideration to organizing a more focused and cohesive debate on the state of the global economy. It should also adapt itself to discussing new and emerging economic and social questions, for example identification of additional sources of finance for development and the social dimension of globalization. ILO had already shown the way in that respect by focusing on employment as a global goal and recognizing that the opportunity to work was an essential ingredient of human dignity. Finally, the Council should hold short, focused meetings outside its regular session in order to deal with issues as they arose.

Mr. GONG Tingrong (China), having associated his delegation with the statement made by the observer for Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Ad Hoc Working Group on follow-up to conferences and summits was an invaluable tool for enabling the United Nations to implement the outcomes of the major international forums, and the Council was a vitally important coordinating mechanism which should play a central role. The

Council should accordingly prepare and adopt a multi-year work programme to facilitate its coordination work. It should continue to focus on questions of concern to the developing countries. Greater cooperation with the various United Nations funds and programmes, the Bretton Woods institutions and the WTO were also prerequisites for translating the decisions adopted at international conferences and summits into practical reality.

Ms. MAMADOVA (Azerbaijan) said that the Millennium Summit, the Monterrey Consensus and the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development were the foundations of the international agenda for development, and they had all outlined the key role of the Council in coordinating follow-up activities. The principal organs of the United Nations should seek to work together in a coherent and coordinated manner, for example in international emergencies and protracted conflicts, which necessitated particularly close cooperation between the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council.

There should be more convergence in selecting thematic areas for the Council's high-level segment, which among other things would make it possible to iron out inconsistencies in poverty reduction strategies. The Council should provide timely guidance on devising and realigning national development policy. A key role should be assigned to the United Nations resident coordinators, and there should be more aggressive promotion at the national level of multi-stakeholder dialogue, capacity-building and strengthened interaction with the Bretton Woods institutions.

Her delegation favoured active cooperation between United Nations country teams and specialized agencies that were unrepresented at the national level, and welcomed Council participation in regional initiatives and organizations. The regional commissions were important because they provided the organizational framework to implement the Council's work at the regional level. Greater cooperation between the functional and regional commissions could be encouraged through regional implementation meetings at which countries could benefit from the lessons learned and assimilate the best practices.

High-level meetings between the Council, the Bretton Woods institutions and the WTO would help to mobilize the required resources both domestically and internationally. The financing for development process provided an opportunity for donors to demonstrate their

commitment by increasing the overall quantity of aid and ensuring that aid was more effectively deployed. Last but not least, the Council had a key role to play in the wider diffusion of information and communication technologies, thereby providing the means to bridge the digital divide.

Ms. ANDAYANI (Observer for Indonesia) said that the implementation of the MDGs, the Monterrey Consensus and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation threw down a number of strategic challenges to the United Nations system, and to the Council in particular. It must ensure that the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits were interlinked and contributed collectively to an integrated framework for the implementation of development goals. At the same time, the Council had been charged with maximizing the potential of the various functional commissions and subsidiary organs, and with ensuring policy coherence between the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions and the WTO with a view to eradicating poverty, promoting food security and fostering sustainable development.

The Ad Hoc Working Group had requested the Council to apply a cross-sectoral approach in reviewing the implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits. To that end, the Council should establish a multi-year work programme based on a focused and balanced list of cross-sectoral thematic issues. The regional commissions had a particularly significant role to play in addressing the regional dimension of cross-cutting goals and targets. The Council should invite the President of the UNCTAD Trade and Development Board and other representatives of the Board to attend its high-level meeting together with representatives of the Bretton Woods institutions and of the WTO, thereby integrating development dimensions into key areas.

Mr. LORENZO (Observer for Mexico) said that General Assembly resolution 57/270 B had reaffirmed the Council's role as the central coordinating body in the United Nations system. The Council should adopt a multi-year work programme that gave due weight to the operational and policy sides of its work. A set of indicators needed to be devised to measure the progress made towards implementing the outcomes of the major summits and conferences. United Nations bodies, specialized agencies, programmes and funds, and especially

the regional commissions, should all play their part in coordination efforts. Much greater efforts were required to involve the Bretton Woods institutions and the WTO in follow-up activities, considering that they were central to any discussion of sustainable development.

Mr. STENVOLD (Observer for Norway), having associated his delegation with the statement made by the representative of Italy on behalf of the European Union, said that the development agenda was a multilateral endeavour and the Council had a pivotal role to play in the follow-up to the major United Nations summits and conferences. The various conferences had different emphases and distinct outcomes, but the ultimate objective of all of them was sustainable development. The Council was well placed to ensure that the different outcomes were mutually supportive and aligned. The Bretton Woods institutions and the WTO should necessarily be involved in the process given that finance and trade were central to the conference goals.

Mr. ROJAS (Chile), having associated his delegation with the statement made by the observer for Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that General Assembly resolution 57/270 B formed an excellent basis for implementing the outcomes of United Nations conferences and summits in the field of development. In that connection, the reformulation of the agenda of the Second Committee of the General Assembly was a sine qua non for rethinking the Organization's development goals. The Council's functional commissions must focus on implementation of the conference outcomes and make use of indicators to monitor their progress. The Council should immediately start to think about new ways to fulfil the mandate entrusted to it under the aforesaid resolution. Its policies should at all times be consistent with its implementation efforts.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.